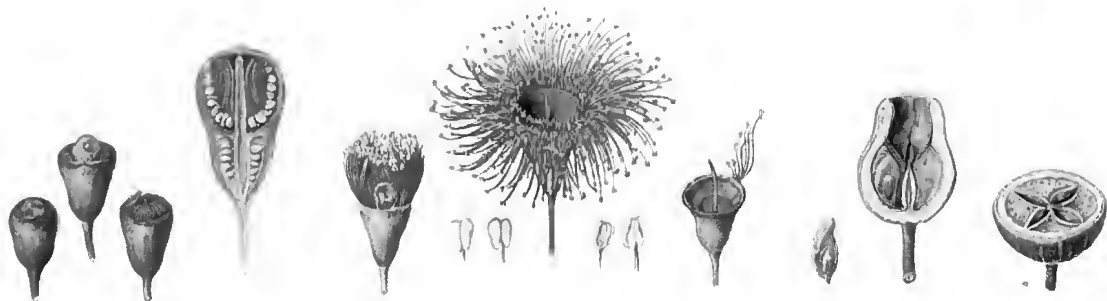


Australian Garden

Vol 12 No 3 November/December 2000

HISTORY



Journal of the Australian Garden History Society

Australian Garden History is the official journal of the Australian Garden History Society and is published six times a year.

ENQUIRIES

Toll Free 1800 678 446
Ph (03) 9650 5043
Fax (03) 9650 8470
AGHS Office
Royal Botanic Gardens
Birdwood Avenue
South Yarra
Victoria 3141
aghs@vicnet.net.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For 1 year membership:
Single \$47
Family \$61
Corporate \$73
Youth (25 and under) \$20

ADVERTISING RATES

GST inclusive
1/8 page \$132 (2+ issues \$121)
1/4 page \$220 (2+ issues \$198)
1/2 page \$330 (2+ issues \$275)
Full page \$550 (2+ issues \$495)
Inserts \$440 per page

EDITOR

Trisha Dixon
Bobundara, Cooma, NSW 2630
Ph (02) 6453 5578
Fax (02) 6453 5557
e-mail: trisha@snowy.net.au

DESIGN

Andrew Rankine Design Associates
Ph (02) 6292 7819
www.arda.nct.au

PRINTING

Goanna Print, Canberra

ISSN 1033-3673

FRONT COVER

Corymbia ficifolia by
Jenny Phillips (see page 22)



GUEST EDITORIAL

by Howard Tanner



and on the other, they were eyecatchers in the landscape. The exhibition conveyed the variety and number of such structures in late 19th century Geelong, and indeed Australia, and also the generally transitory nature of such timber constructions.

My favourite summerhouse is in the grounds of Admiralty House on a bluff overlooking Sydney Harbour. I first observed it as a school boy from the ferry boat. During summer, banks of blue-flowering hydrangeas overhang the water's edge and high above, enfolded by camellia bushes and old olive trees is the little summer house – octagonal, and painted in Norfolk green – just large enough to sit writing a letter or to take tea. In my imagination it was a secluded place for lovers to rendezvous.

The 19th century pretensions of the newly rich found expression in the dream of a splendid mansion and estate on the British model. At the Campbell family's property Duntroon (now contained within the grounds of the Royal Military Academy in Canberra) elaborate Gothic extensions to the original bungalow, an octagonal conservatory and a garden maze are part of this antipodean dream. Labour-intensive gardens such as these had their hey-day between 1870 and 1914, when pastoral prosperity allowed for numerous outdoor staff to plant, water and maintain elaborate horticultural episodes or the countless plants of a giant maze. Elsewhere, Edwardian grottoes of real and faux rockwork, lengthy pergolas and trellises of wood and wire are further evidence of the desire for elaborate architectural devices and the occasional garden folly.

Today, new landscape designs by Vladimir (Tom) Sitta reveal a bold interpretation and continuation of such historic themes. In *Paradise Transformed: The Private Garden in the Twenty-First Century* (Monacelli Press, New York, 1996) one can see his most remarkable realised garden to date, near Harden in New South Wales. Hedged vistas cleave the landscape, while tilted alder trees form a green cathedral, and a stone 'folly cove' emits and dematerialises the immediate setting with clouds of mist. In a most abstract and contemporary way, Sitta here revives the grand landscape tradition of perambulatory intrigue, accented by follies and grottoes.

With Richard Weller and Room 4.1.3 – in schemes for Centennial Park, Sydney and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra – Sitta seeks to create a symbolic Australian landscape, graphically realised on a huge scale. As part of contemporary history, I hope the Journal will see fit to publish their work in the near future.

Howard Tanner

Howard Tanner helped found, and became the second chairman of the A.G.H.S. During the 1970s he extensively researched Australia's garden history for several books and a major travelling exhibition. As Chairman of the N.S.W. Heritage Council 1993-1996 he instigated the study and identification of the surviving colonial gardens in the Sydney region. His Sydney-based architectural practice, Tanner & Associates, is well known for its schools, housing and heritage work and has masterplanned major gardens at Goulburn and Mittagong.

CONTENTS
MAZES AND GROTTOES



4

Mazes

BARRY LONG recounts the history of the labyrinth

10

Geelong Maze – A Thorny Puzzle

TRISHA DIXON highlights an account of one of Australia's earliest mazes

12

Stone Circle - Monaro

JOHN AND PHYLL McLEAN on the creation of a stone circle

14

A Craftsman of Rock: the work of Charles Robinette

DAVID JONES looks at Australia's master grotto designer

17

The Rippon Lea Grotto

RICHARD HEATHCOTE depicts the creation of one of Australia's only remaining grottoes

19

With Seeds in Their Pockets

SUZANNE HUNT reports on a seminar looking at immigrants and their gardens

21

The Bookshelf

PETER TIMMS dips into Neil Robertson and Louise Earwaker's 'Open Garden' book and a look at a book to be launched this month on Elizabeth Bay Garden

22

Botanical Snippets

23

Calendar of Events

24

The Back Page: The Lady in Blue

TRISHA DIXON searches through the labyrinth of information for clues to the identity of the woman in the painting of her Bobundara garden

Thanks to Georgina Whitehead, John and Beverley Joyce, Di Ellerton, Kate McKern, Elizabeth Wright, Nola Foster and Jackie Courmadias for packing the last issue of the Journal.

© Australian Garden History Society 2000. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form for commercial purposes wholly or in part (other than the circumstances outlined in any agreement between the author/artist/photographer/illustrator and the Society) without the prior written permission of the publisher. Permission may be granted subject to an acknowledgment being made. Copying for private and educational purposes is permitted provided acknowledgment is made in any report, thesis or other document which has used information contained in this publication.

**NATIONAL
MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE**

PATRON

Margaret Darling

CHAIRMAN

Peter Watts

VICE CHAIRMAN

Richard Heathcote

TREASURER

Elizabeth Walker

SECRETARY

Helen Page

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Jackie Courmadias

ELECTED MEMBERS

Virginia Berger

Nicky Downer

Jan Gluskie

Katie Holmes

Colleen Morris

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Gabrielle Tryon (ACT)

Nick Bray (NSW)

Miriam Hansman (SA)

Deirdre Pearson (Tas)

Helen Page (Vic)

Anne Willox (WA)

Richard Jones (Q'ld)

BRANCHES

**ACT/MONARO/
RIVERINA BRANCH**

Gabrielle Tryon

4 Anstey Street,

Pearce, ACT 2607

Ph: (02) 6286 4585

QUEENSLAND BRANCH

Richard Jones

35 Fernbourne Road,

Wellington Point,

Queensland 4160

Ph: (07) 3207 4018

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
BRANCH**

Miriam Hansman

66 Alexandra Ave,

Rose Park, SA 5067

Ph: (08) 8333 0043

**SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
BRANCH**

Nicholas Bray

PO Box 323

Moss Vale, NSW 2577

Ph: (02) 4868 3376

Email: noodle@tpgi.com.au

**SYDNEY AND NORTHERN
NSW BRANCH**

Colleen Morris

33-35 Ilka Street,

Lillyfield, NSW 2040

Ph: (02) 9660 0573

TASMANIAN BRANCH

Mrs Deirdre Pearson

15 Ellingron Road,

Sandy Bay, Tas 7005

Ph: (03) 6225 3084

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Helen Page

C/- Royal Botanic Gardens

Birdwood Avenue

South Yarra, Vic 3141

Ph/Fax: (03) 9650 5043

**WEST AUSTRALIAN
BRANCH**

Linda Green

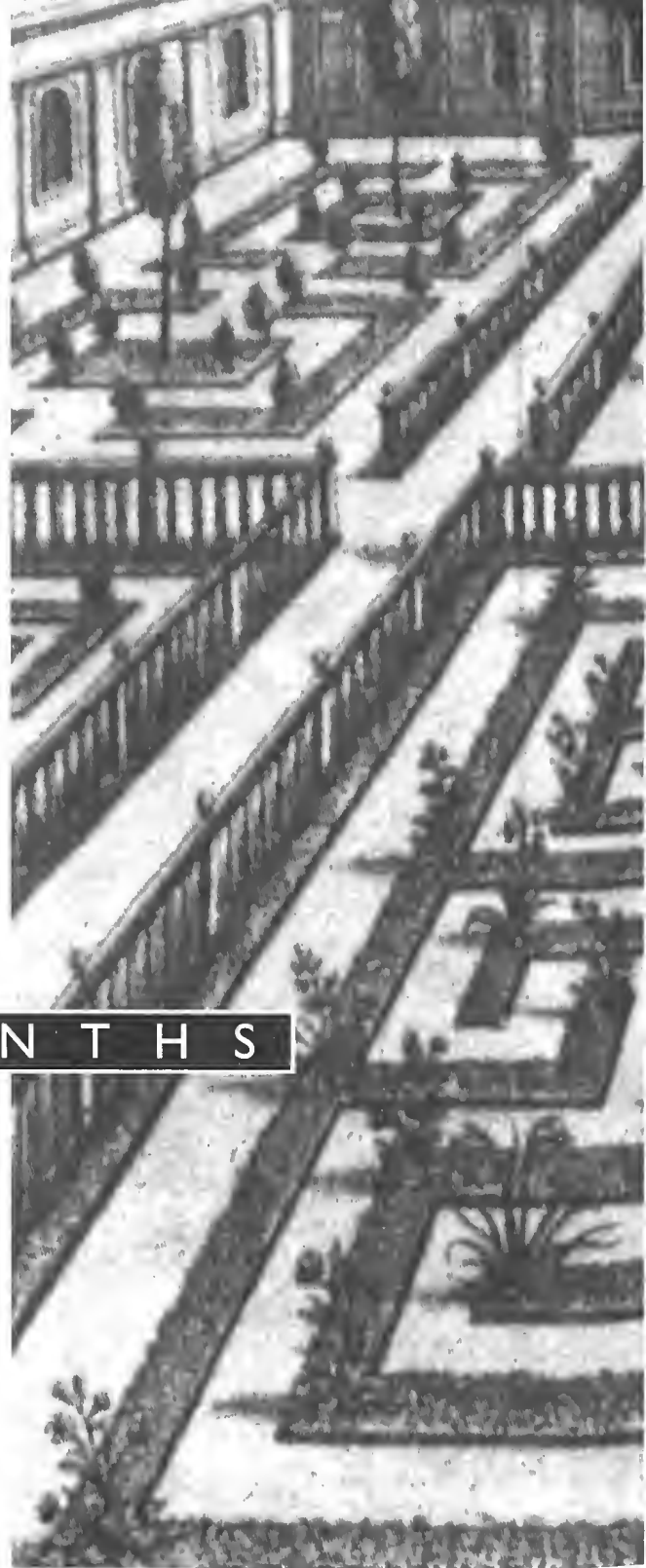
28 Wardie St

South Fremantle, WA 6162

(08) 9335 5906

Fax (08) 9335 1475

email: bidcote@global.net.au



Mazes

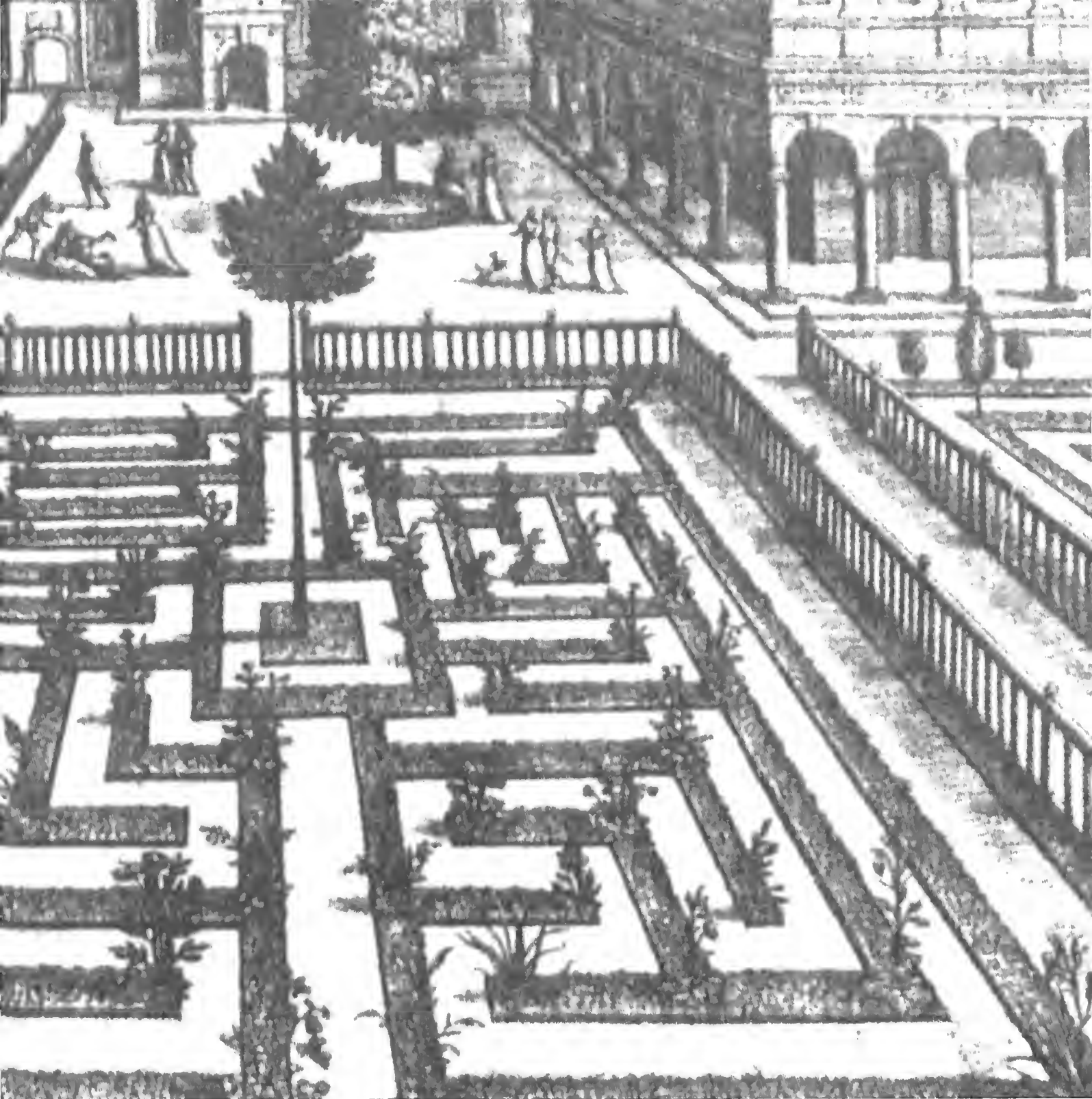
LABYRINTHS

by Barry Long

THE PUZZLE MAZE, TYPICALLY A HEDGE MAZE, is the usual image brought to mind when mazes are mentioned. There has been a complex evolution to this particular expression of garden ornamentation and amusement.

The labyrinth motif is an ancient mystical and ritual symbol found, apparently unrelated, in many parts of the world. The words labyrinth and maze can be used interchangeably but maze is now generally used for the garden structure usually with a puzzle element. It has been conjectured that the classic labyrinth design (see Fig. 1 on page 6) has an entrail or womb-like appearance and evokes the sense of fertility and food gathering, basic elements in the life of primitive man. As such the design has been found scratched on rocks by primitive cultures; it appears in the myth of the Minotaur and was seen in ancient buildings such as the

Egyptian labyrinth (c. 2000 BC) and in the tomb of Lars Porsena, the Etruscan king (c. 600 BC) and seems to have strong links with Troy, the seven traverses representing the seven cities or perhaps the mass of impenetrable defences with the goal representing the city itself. In Scandinavia ritual mazes outlined in stone were built and in England, Wales and Germany turf mazes were laid out and used at times of celebration. The design is incorporated into the floor, as a mosaic, in some of the great gothic cathedrals perhaps as part of the known Christian habit of converting pagan symbols and rituals to a Christian meaning.

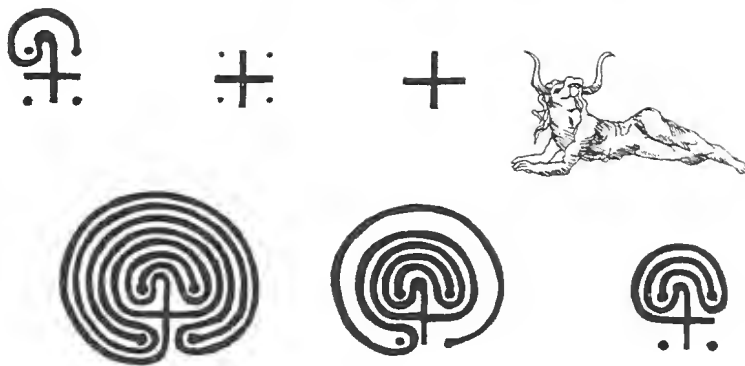
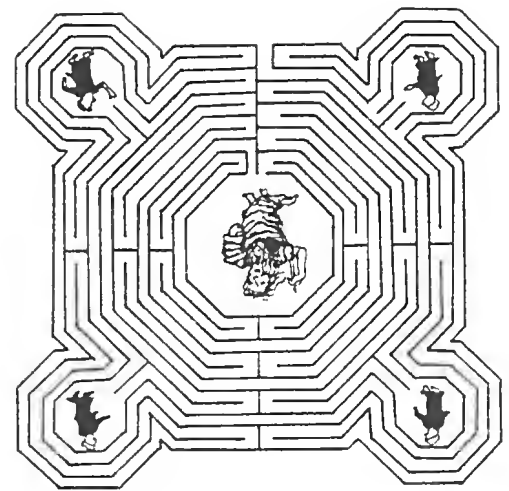
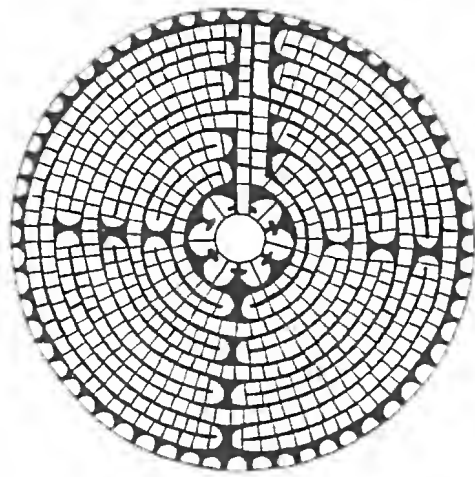


Two of the most famous cathedral mazes are illustrated (see Fig.2 on p.6). The one at Rheims was ordered to be removed because of the noise created during services by children using the maze when they should have been at their devotions.

Although garden mazes or labyrinths were first mentioned in the twelfth century it is not clear what form they took at this time. They were probably garden buildings or trellis work structures. The Renaissance saw a new use of the labyrinth symbol. Its humanist philosophy and inspiration taken from the classical example saw a new style of house and garden evolve. Alberti in his book

On Building (1452) recommended a return to the style of the Roman villa and garden. Symmetrical planting of trees and shrubs relating to the villa was recommended. In itself this was novel as previously the house and garden had been seen as separate entities with any integration being accidental. The garden was to be formal and contain groves of trees and labyrinths or mazes. There is, in fact, no firm evidence that the Romans had mazes as envisaged by Alberti although they used complicated topiary designs for children and exercise for soldiers laid out a labyrinthine pattern on the ground known as the Game of Troy. The vigour of Renaissance

above: Fig 3
Floral labyrinth of modified
Cretan design



above: Fig 1
Cretan labyrinth design

top: Fig 2
Cathedral pavement mazes –
Rheims (left) and Chartres

ideas saw the rapid establishment of mazes as a garden element. The mazes initially took the form of low hedges or floral labyrinths mainly with a unicursal path and less often with a simple puzzle element. The pattern commonly was that of a stylised Cretan labyrinth. The floral labyrinth contained hedges of low-growing plants or clipped shrubs embellished with statues and other ornaments. The botanical enrichment of gardens from China and the Americas was yet to come and mazes of this type offering a pleasant walk with diversions on the way to the goal at the centre were a means of increasing the interest of a garden (see Fig. 3 on p.4-5).

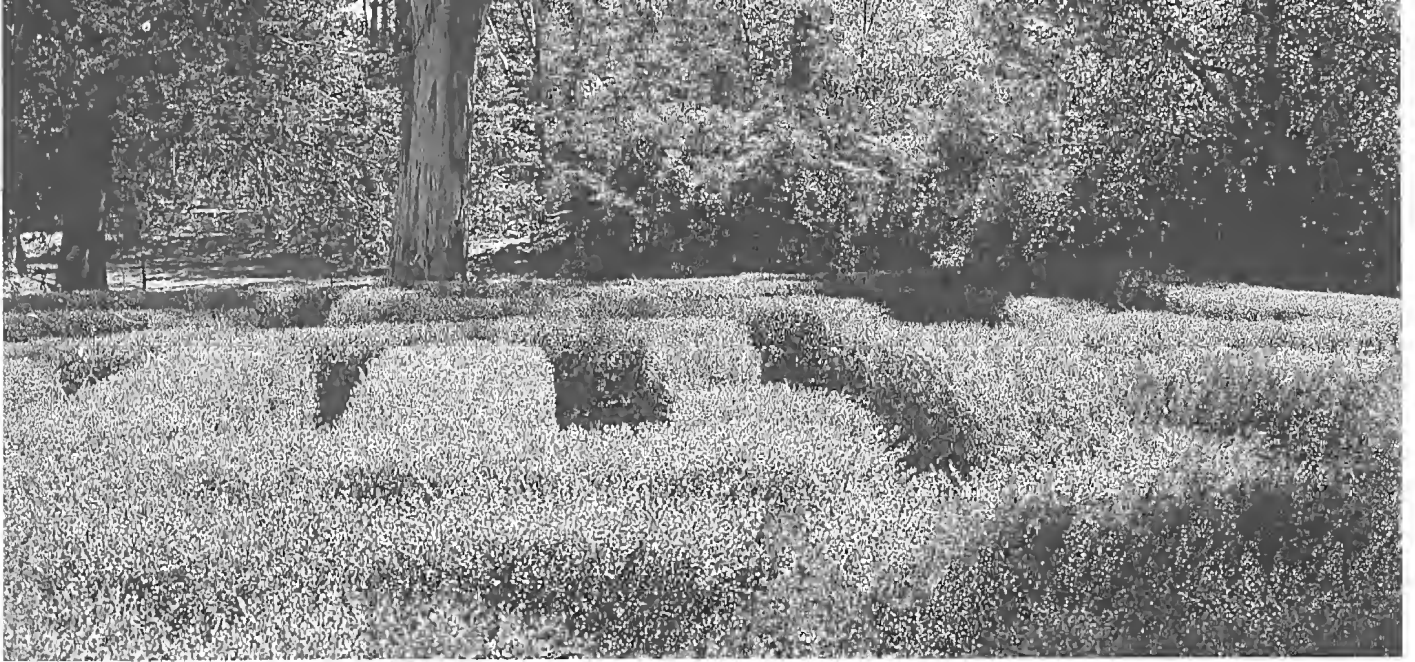
In the late Tudor era the height of the hedges increased and the puzzle element began to dominate and this form of maze remained popular in large gardens until the eighteenth century when the landscape style characterised by 'Capability' Brown replaced the earlier more formal gardens and their mazes. Late in his career, 'Capability' Brown was the Royal Gardener at Hampton Court but ironically was forbidden to touch the Hampton Court maze. Mazes persisted in pleasure gardens in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These were public gardens laid out for the entertainment, in a garden setting, of the growing working and middle classes created by the Industrial Revolution. Records are scanty

but the pleasure gardens undoubtedly contained mazes. During the high Victorian era in the late nineteenth century large, lavish and often eclectic private gardens were laid out containing much garden architecture and ornamentation including mazes. With the advent of the more modern style of 'wild' gardening advocated by William Robinson and the style of Gertrude Jekyll emphasising colour harmony over an architectural framework combined with increasing labour costs and the scarcity of man-power caused by the two world wars the high maintenance hedge puzzles mazes again largely disappeared.

In the 1970s there was a renewal of interest in mazes world-wide but particularly in Britain which has a climate particularly favourable to hedge mazes. Japan had a craze for wooden puzzle mazes in the 1980s and there were about 150 mazes with maze runners attempting to traverse the maze in the shortest possible time. The new era has produced mazes which are more diverse and complex than in the past. Hedge mazes are still planted but other forms include wooden panel, turf, stone, pavement, colour, water and mirror mazes. Mazes can incorporate themes, symbols and hidden meanings to challenge and educate. The renewed popularity of mazes may relate to the current interest in adventure travel.

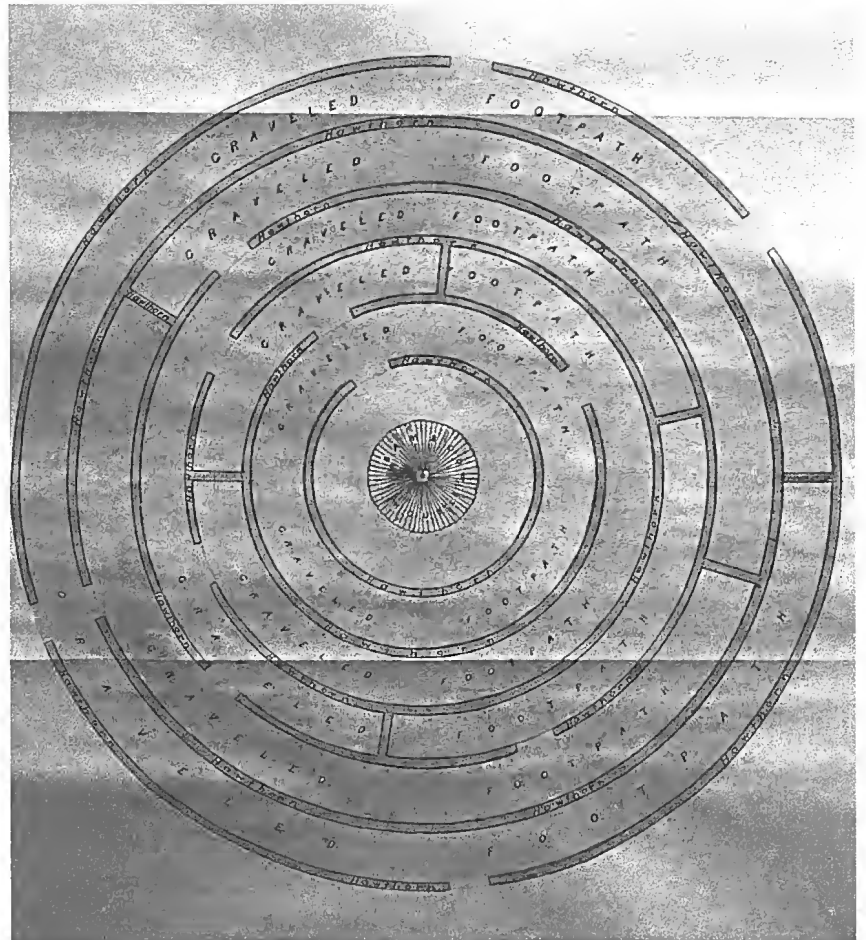
Australia's large colonial gardens followed the late Victorian fashion and some contained mazes. All but one (Duntroon) were in public gardens and there may not have been quite the wealth in Australia to maintain mazes. The first of the colonial mazes was in Cremorne Gardens in suburban Melbourne, a pleasure garden with the maze being laid out to an 'English' plan in c.1853. (see Fig. 4) gives some idea of what was offered to the public in a Victorian pleasure garden. Two mazes were planted in the Ballarat Botanic Gardens, the first in 1862 (*Acacia paradoxa*) succeeded by another in 1888. Duntroon,

Dr Barry Long is a physician in Adelaide. He enjoys gardening in the Adelaide hills on the banks of the Sturt River and has an interest in garden history. The maze in Belair National Park is near his childhood home and when he became involved in the project to restore it his interest was stimulated in the subject and the extensive legendary and historical associations of the maze.



originally a grazing property, had a Hampton Court design maze planted by Marianne Campbell. This was a smaller and squared up copy of the original irregular trapezoid. The area became Duntroon Military College and the maze was removed in 1954 but replanted in 1965 and is currently planted with cotoneaster (see Fig. 5). There was a maze in Carlton Gardens, Melbourne planted c.1880 for the Great Exhibition. Belair National Park, at the time of its formation in 1891 had a maze, planted in 1888, of *Crataegus monogyna* and another maze was planted in 1902 of Kaffir apple both to the same English plan. The latter was removed, derelict, in 1950, a victim of the wartime scarcity of resources and man-power. The original maze survived partly intact and has been progressively restored by the S.A. Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. The original plan and the maze after restoration are illustrated (see Figs. 6 & 7). This is the only surviving colonial maze in Australia and one of the few in the world dating from the nineteenth century.

Australia has approximately 66 mazes known to the author. They are generally in tourist complexes with a few in public gardens. Only two of the number (these have not been confirmed: near Healesville and in the Western District of Victoria) are in private gardens. About half of the Australian mazes are of hedge, a third wooden panel with the remainder being of roses, trellised climbers, brick wall, pavement or colour mazes with one turf maze and a stone circle. Ashcombe Maze (Shoreham, Vic.) is the first commercial hedge maze and the best known maze complex with the original maze being planted with an unnamed form of *Cupressus lambertiana*. Tasmazia, Promised Land, (Tas.) is another tourist complex and is illustrated in Fig. 9 and indicates the diversity of expression that can be given to mazes. Wooden panel mazes are relatively cheap to build and maintain and have proved popular in commercial tourist attractions.



The general appearance of this type of maze is shown in Fig. 10. This maze is located in a public park at St Kilda, S.A. Another example of mazes, in a public park, is in tropical Queensland. Queens Gardens in Townsville contains two small mirror image mazes of *Murraya paniculata* flanking a path (Fig. 11).

Although the maze is again enjoying a renewed popularity, mainly as a tourist attraction, the maze concept has not really found its way back into the private garden. Over the span of human existence it has embodied some of the most ancient symbolism, some of our most important myths,

above top: Fig 5
Duntroon maze

above: Fig 6
Plan of first Belair maze

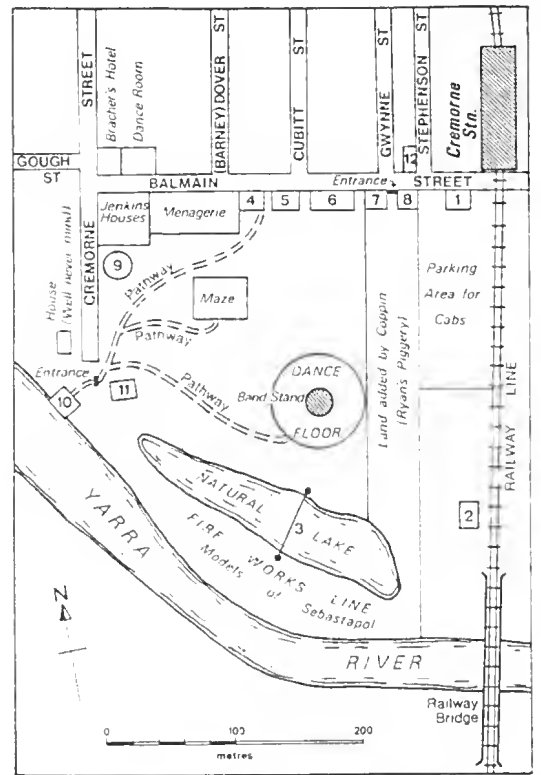
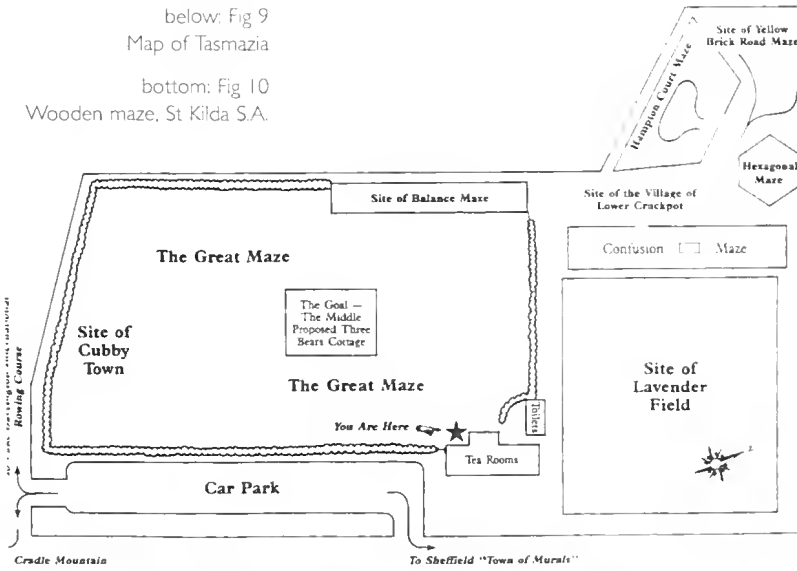
opposite page, top: Fig 7
Partly restored Belair maze

bottom: Fig 11
Mazes, Queens Gardens,
Townsville, Queensland.

right: Fig 4
Plan of Cremorne Gardens

below: Fig 9
Map of Tasmazia

bottom: Fig 10
Wooden maze, St Kilda S.A.



those of the Cretan labyrinth and Troy, has been turned to a religious use and has been incorporated in many games and rituals. Hopscotch is laid out in the form of a gothic cathedral with the game having a connection to the maze symbol. Morris dancing is thought to relate to ancient maze dancing. The modern maze has lost much of its rich history and is used for ornament, safe adventure and education. Traditional mazes are too large and labour intensive to include in modern gardens but pavement mazes with a path inlaid into a paved area in the garden such as a courtyard could add additional enjoyment. The floral labyrinth also has potential for modern application. Only a small area would be needed to create a simple maze-like path flanked by garden beds filled with interesting plants. It would certainly allow an interesting display in a plantsmans gardens with the goal at the centre perhaps being a seat allowing a relaxed appreciation of the surrounding beauty of the garden. The labyrinth is a very rich and complex symbol and its use, given imagination, is unlimited.





GEELONG maze

- A THORNY PUZZLE

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING HISTORIC MAZES in Australia was once sited in Geelong, Victoria.

by Trisha Dixon

Known as 'the Richardson Maze' after Mayor, Councillor H.F. Richardson, the maze, although an ambitious project, was never a success and had a short life span.

George Jones, who has documented the gardening history of Geelong in his book, *Growing Together* quotes a report to Geelong Town Council in 1896 by Mayor Richardson: '*...I have to thank the Council for kindly falling in with my idea, and contributing a portion of the special vote towards constructing a maze in the Eastern Park, which I feel sure, in years to come will be an attraction to visitors and residents.*'

Although allegedly providing a lot of fun for a while, its failure to grow and its harbour for rabbits were the main reasons for its demise.

A site was selected 'in front and a little to the right of the curator's residence' and funding of one hundred pounds put forward. On the afternoon of August 26, 1896, George Jones reports that the members of the gardens committee paid their monthly visit of inspection...

The first place inspected was the maze, which is in course of construction, and as the walks forming what in the future promises to be a source of attraction, and distraction, have been laid out and planted on each side with boxthorn, the councillors undertook the unravelling of the puzzle. The labyrinth of short paths, gentle but misleading turns and false passages, tried the patience and the pedestrian abilities of the Corporation representatives, but, under the guidance of the curator, they eventually reached the centre of the maze after traversing fully a quarter of a mile of country. The committee held a meeting in the centre of the maze and arranged various matters.

From *The Geelong Advertiser*

The townsfolk had their turn on Sunday September 6 when several hundred people enjoyed 'considerable merriment' attempting to unravel the mystery of the maze.

However, it literally failed to grow. 'So much so, that on a similar "monthly visit of inspection" six

years later the committee noted the height was only about 18 inches.

The *Geelong Times*, 16th

October, 1902, said "Its progress, however, during the past 12 months, since the privet and white thorn was mixed with the boxthorn, has been more rapid, and it is estimated that in about 12 years' hence it will be high enough to get 'lost' in it." George Jones writes.

Plants chosen for the maze were an unusual choice – and ones that discouraged any 'cheating' by climbing over or under the hedges. White thorn is the common hawthorn, *Crataegus oxycantha* with its mass of sharp thorny branches; and the boxthorn, *Lycium ferocissimum* is aptly named for its ferocious thorns (used in Africa for keeping lions at bay and in colonial gardens as hedges to keep stock from straying). Interestingly all three plants chosen (privet, hawthorn and boxthorn) were introduced species – all popular hedging plants - later to become noxious weeds.

Another introduced species of the four-legged variety was found to be using the thorny protection of the maze to dig their burrows and in 1905, the East Geelong Police detected four young men searching for rabbits in the maze. George Jones writes that complaints had been made by the curator that rabbiters had been damaging it. 'On this occasion they had brought a greyhound with them and had climbed the fence. The council decision: "The youths be warned."

An amusing incident, before the demise of the maze, was reported in *The Sun News-Pictorial*, October 30, 1924 – the author having trouble with his/her spelling:

Every city, like every man, at some time or other has had a joke against itself. Geelong's joke is its maize.

Thirty years ago a 1/4-acre block, elaborately and geometrically set out, was planned with maize in the Botanic Gardens. A fence was built around the block to protect the cereal when it sprang into growth. The maize grew to a certain height, then went on strike.

The children of the time, who longed to explore among the stunted stems, have long since grown into manhood, but the maize declines to reach final growth.



Geelong's patience is incorruptible. The maize is beguiled with water, and the fence kept in diligent repair.

'Still' as George Jones writes, 'the joke about the maze was wearing a little thin.' Although it did not appear to have grown much in recent years, it was allowed to linger on until 1930 when it was finally decided that the hedges forming it be removed, bringing an end to the Geelong maze.

'To my mind the maze was "just another maze" George Jones thought 'until I received a letter from Dr Barry M. Long ...it then took on a new significance, as I am sure you will agree.'

Dr Long considered the maze, in general outline, to be identical to a plan in a rare book, *The Orchard and Garden*, published by Adam Islip in 1602. The

designs in Islip's book were obtained from French and Dutch sources. The design is for a floral labyrinth and is unicursal. If the design was adopted for the Geelong maze it would have been modified to conform with the Victorian puzzle style. It is also similar to that of the Hever Castle maze in Britain which was planted only a little later in 1902.

Today there is no trace of the maze and the area once covered by its thorny hedges is now just outside the present Geelong Botanic Gardens. An aerial photograph of the Gardens taken in 1925 shows the maze as its focal point. 'Regrettably it never grew satisfactorily and must be looked upon as a failure' George Jones says. 'However, as far as history is concerned, failures are just as important as successes.'

Aerial view of the Richardson Maze, created more than a hundred years ago, photographed in 1925, five years before its demise.

CIRCLE

In mythology, a symbol
of totality and wholeness.
In western magic an important
symbol used in ceremonial
workings within the temple.



by Phyll and John McLean

A VISIT TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY of Art in Washington, USA last year provided the inspiration for making 'Stone Circle – Monaro'.

Looking down from a balcony at the Gallery, there was a large circular area covered with pieces of slate. It was captivating.

This was the work of international artist Richard Long, born in England 1945. Considered to be one of Britain's leading artists, Richard always uses natural materials. His work includes walks, sculptures and mud works. Some of his works are exhibited in galleries, while others are in open spaces ranging from localities near his home in Bristol to remote and isolated places in many parts of the world.

'I like common materials, whatever is to hand, but especially stones. I like the idea that stones are what the world is made of. I like to use the symmetry of patterns between time, places and time, between distance and time, between stones and distance, between time and stones,' writes Richard Long.

We live in a beautiful place of subtle colouring. The hills of the Monaro, rising above the treeless plains, are covered with eucalypts, callitris and acacia. The understory is parched and rocky. The rocks, grey with lichen and green with moss, are most beautiful after rain. We built our house low, and coloured it to blend in with the surroundings. Our garden merges gradually with the surrounding

bush. In this setting we planned our stone circle.

There was some debate over site selection, the first location being rejected on the grounds of excessive earth works. The next site was conveniently below the house; it was at a junction of several garden paths, and was lightly screened by native trees. It was not a horizontal plane, but its slight saddle shape was able to be reduced to a gently sloping plane without too much pick and shovel work.

The decision as to where and how big the circle should be became a family affair in which an artistic daughter played a pivotal role. Using a garden hose we laid it out and moved it around until it looked right. Then the centre of the circle was located and referred to recovery marks on neighbouring trees, and the radius was measured. It was 3.23 metres.

The circle was marked for the time being with small stones which served as a guide while some cutting and filling was done to create a plane.

The next task was to gather suitable stones. It was estimated that if they were to be the size of dinner plates, about four hundred would be required. As it turned out many were smaller so far more were used. All of the stones were covered with lichen, and some had moss. We gathered them off our property, and, the Monaro being what it is (known for its stony terrain) there were plenty left. Regretfully, we unhoused about a dozen scorpions, about the same number that over the

*My work
is about
an emotional
one to one
relationship
with nature*

- Richard Long



years have gate-crashed our house. There seemed to be a rough justice in this.

The stones were not all the size of dinner plates. The largest had a mass of about seventy kilograms, but many were like saucers; altogether there were about seven hundred pieces.

The stones varied in thickness between five and one hundred and fifty millimetres. It became evident that as well as having a texture in the planned position of the close fitting pieces of stone there had to be a texture in vertical dimension. There also had to be a further texture in lichen colour, with its various shades of green and brown.

Surrounding the circle we cleared a pathway and surfaced it with detritus from overhanging trees. Some of the low branches are hazardous for tall people, but have been allowed to remain for the artistic contribution of the overhang.

Now that construction is finished we can enjoy the benefits of our stone circle. We feel that there is a correctness in the location of the circle. It is the focus of garden paths and can be glimpsed from most of the garden. Although understated in itself it has come to dominate the garden.

Now that it has known snow in winter, the harsh sun of summer (when it has become a lizard motel), the gentleness of autumn rains and the wild winds of spring, its timeless quality is enhanced. It is as though it has been there forever.

This timelessness is perhaps inevitable. The circle has had since earliest times a magic, mysterious quality. It is a symbol of wholeness, of totality.



It has no beginning and no end.

Walking the land, choosing and placing the stones, and the joy of joint achievement was a wonderful experience. We have created a place for meditation, dreaming, peace, tranquillity and spiritual renewal.

*My stones are like grains of sand
in the space of the landscape*

- Richard Long

RICHARD LONG

my art is in the nature of things

British artist Richard Long accepted John Kaldor's invitation to visit Australia in 1977. Like his contemporaries Gilbert & George, Long studied sculpture at St Martin's School of Art in London in the late sixties. Although Long's work is far removed in sensibility from that of the 'living sculptures', in their shared rejection of formalism they both created work that expanded the definition of sculpture through the action of the artist. In Long's case, the action is mostly walking.

Richard Long's trips are not expeditions of discovery but conceptually defined walks through different landscapes. For example, *A straight hundred mile walk in Australia 1977* is one of a series of straight hundred mile walks undertaken in countries including Ireland, Canada and Japan. The Australian walk was documented through

photographs, which were used to make a work and an artist's book. Long's walk took place near Broken Hill: 'I had no particular destination in mind when I set out. I caught the train from Sydney to Perth and simply got off when I saw country that I thought was suitable.' The walk was made daily, the artist returning to the same campsite each night; the hundred miles refers not to new ground covered but the cumulative total of the daily walking.

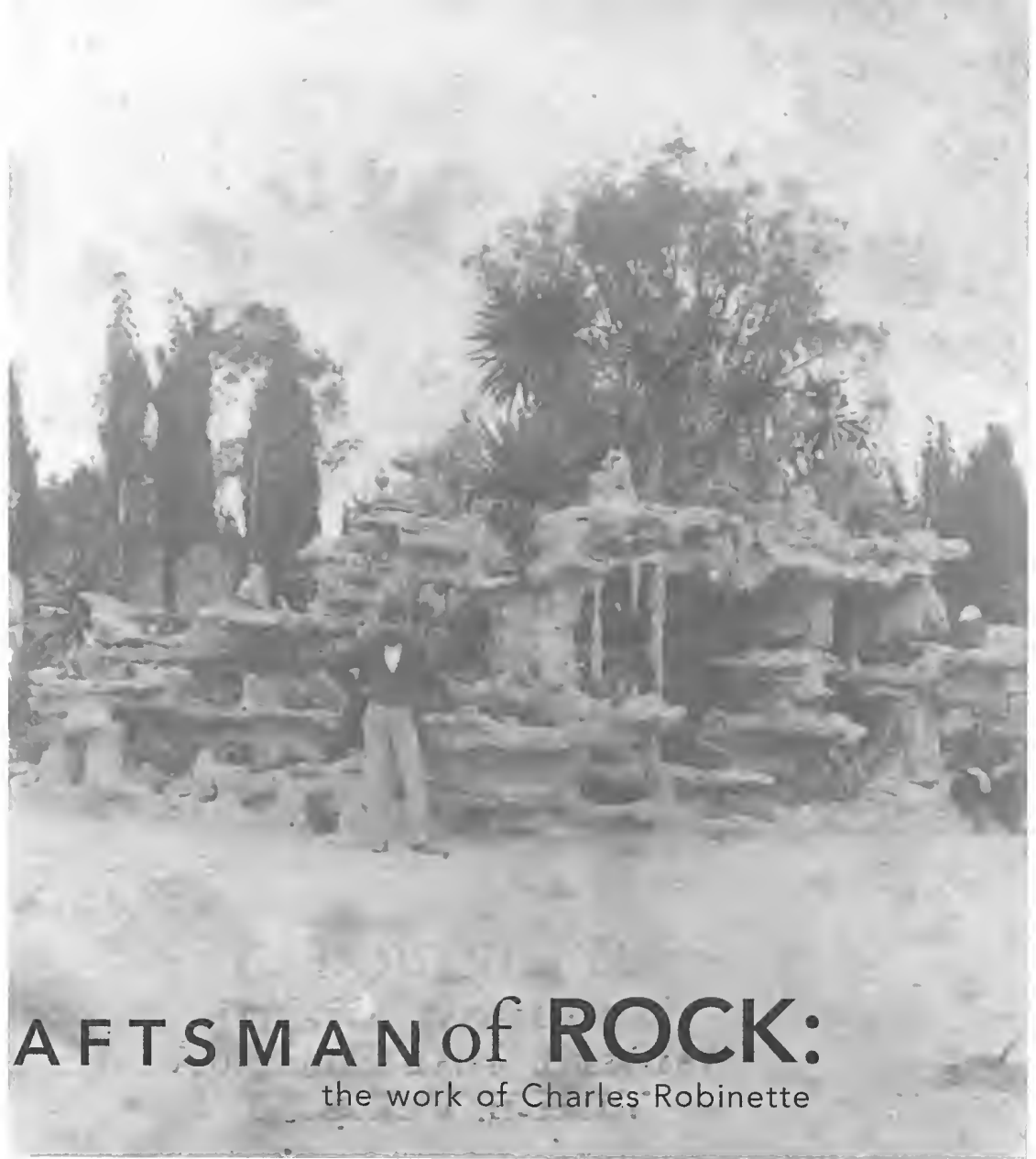
Long also made site-specific works for the Sydney and Melbourne state galleries. Using blue metal stone found at a Sydney quarry, *Stone line* was installed in the entrance gallery of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The branches for *Bushwood circle*, installed at the National Gallery of Victoria, were collected during a walk in bushland near Melbourne.

- John Kaldor Art Project 6 - Richard Long 1977

Bibliography

Fuchs, S. H. 1986, *Richard Long*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Thames and Hudson.
Long, R. 1991, *Walking in Circles*, Thames and Hudson.
Long, R. 1995, *Richard Long*, Sao Paulo Bienal 1994, British Council, London.

Phyll and John McLean live in retirement on rural land near Cooma, NSW. Phyll was a teacher librarian, a focus for her interest in literature, art and history, but most of all, enthused by her mother, she has always been a gardener. John's engineering background is complementary in this, and he scribbles a few words.



a CRAFTSMAN of ROCK: the work of Charles Robinette

by David Jones

NO POET COULD DESIRE A MORE CONGENIAL NOOK in which to conceive or perfect his ideal creations; and few persons with any soul will leave this poem of rock and plants after a retreat of an hour without a feeling of regeneration and quiet enjoyment [sic].

Advertisement,
'C. Robinette, Artistic
Grotto and Horticultural
Builder, Malvern', featuring
the grotto and rockery at
the Melbourne General
Cemetery, c.1895.
(Hall collection)

One of the interesting characters that has been discovered as a result of the forthcoming *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* (c.2001), is Charles Robinette (1841-1921). Robinette has surfaced as being the only professional horticultural structure and grotto designer and maker in Australia in the 1870s-1920s.

While we have a considerable literature in Europe, North America, and Australia that reviews the qualities of grottoes we know little of their designers and creators, and less of whether they moved from one project to another and increased the scale and quality of their craftmanship.

Aitken has touched on this topic when reviewing garden structures, and Watts has mentioned several in *Historic Gardens of Victoria* (1983). We know of grottoes at Werrilbee Park and Rippon Lea in Victoria; Wairoa, Anlaby, Montefiore (in North Adelaide - designed for Chief Justice Sir Samuel Way) and The Acacias (in Kensington Park - garden of Adelaide Mayor Sir Edwin Smith) in SA. Most of these grottoes, except the latter two, attempt to adhere to picturesque ideals but with varying degrees of success.

Establishing a Reputation in South Australia

Born in Moulton, Lincolnshire, Robinette served as gardener to Isaac Holden of Oakworth House near Keighley in West Yorkshire, from 1867-1873.

In December 1875, Charles and Mary Robinette, with their first child Julia, sailed to Australia arriving at Port Adelaide in January 1876. Upon arrival the Robinette's established a grocery business first in

Rundle Street and then at Glenelg in 1882 where he established his workshop.

Robinette had no formal training in gardening or horticulture. Instead, he was an adept learner who studied surveying and hydraulic engineering from monographs that he acquired. While there are numerous detailed reviews about his artistic workmanship in creating grotto and rockery structures, there is little recorded that gives us an insight into his design ideas and intentions. Descriptions about what he intended, or any of his ink drawings prepared for each design, are also limited. All point to an unusual expertise in crafting stone, understanding theory and design and hydraulic principles with grotto creation.

In Adelaide, Robinette was engaged to work on several private commissions including Montefiore and The Acacias. The grottoes and rockeries at Montefiore were praised as a triumph ... of nature, art, and practical convenience. The whole is as natural-looking as if it had been carved in toto from the side of a mountain stream ... The only break to the fanciful picture is the little incongruity of pure white stalactites suspended from the decidedly discolored limestone formation of the cave. This is an artistic fault. But no blame to the art builder, who perforce had to use the only material available. Despite this the grotto is a splendid copy of nature, and delightfully picturesque.

At The Acacias he crafted his largest work involving 'innumerable cascades and rills, at the foot of each of which is a pool apparently hollowed out by the constantly falling water.'

A Shift to Melbourne

In late 1885 Robinette gained employment with William Guilfoyle of the Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne. Increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of workmanship of his staff, Guilfoyle commissioned Robinette to craft a rockery in the Garden near the Anderson Street (B Gate) entrance. The small triangular grotto, described as 'a fantastic piece of rockwork,' was planted in typical nineteenth century period succulents.

A reporter recorded critically that it is a ... very extraordinary piece of workmanship ... as though it had dropped from the sky. It consists of irregular masses of stone cemented together, with irregular outlines and surfaces formed into caves, arches, stalactites, &c., with pools intervening, and pockets for plants. We understand it is called a fountain, but by whatever name it may be known, it is totally out of place in such a position, being in no way connected with its surroundings, and is certainly as great a piece of incongruity as ever was perpetuated.

During his project Robinette was also engaged to

ROBINETTE

ARTISTIC GROTTTO AND HORTICULTURAL BUILDER,
MALVERN.



C. ROBINETTE, ARTISTIC GROTTTO AND HORTICULTURAL BUILDER, is prepared to execute orders for the erection of all kinds of Conservatories, Greenhouses, Grottoes, and Ferocious.

C. R. also begs to state that he is a specialist in the art of Grotto Building, and would respectfully invite an inspection of some of his work. Specimens may be seen in the Botanical and Zoological Gardens, Melbourne; also in the Melbourne General Cemetery and the Malvern Public Gardens, and other places.

PLANS, SKETCHES, AND ESTIMATES PREPARED TO ORDER.

The following Report appeared in "The Garden and the Field," February, 1891, of a Grotto built by C. R. for His Honor Mr. S. J. Way, Chief Justice, Adelaide:—

[From "The Garden and the Field," February, 1891.]

If we compare the efforts of ornamental horticulture of the past with the present, it is noticed at once that great strides are being made towards realizing unimagined nature in her right place. This is advanced by reproducing her choice bits of scenery through artistic imitation, and thus transforming the growth of forest and mountain into the very heart of great cities, where they not only afford daily a pure and unadulterated enjoyment to the fortunate possessor, and promote public health, but also tend greatly to raise the artistic taste and level of society in general; and, indeed, in this respect these means occupy an important place, it seems to me, that justify their importance. One of the most successful attempts in this direction I have lately had the pleasure of beholding, viz. the grotto erected at the residence of His Honor the Chief Justice, at North Adelaide, and whose lines reflect very truly and fully the impressions of the author. Though not extensive, yet the skill with which idealized nature, art, and practical construction have been combined, secured very happy results, and reflects the highest credit upon its designer. The arrangements for the water supply of the feathered pets, often forming a note for more than one sign of voice, have been ingeniously converted into an ornament; the water, constantly changing, is contained in pools among rock walls, representing a small grotto draped with ferns, and overhauled by tall shrubs. The whole is as natural-looking as if it had been carved in toto from the side of a mountain stream. But the gem of the whole appeared to be the still undisturbed lagoon, bearing a rocky of truly life-like aspect, with precipitous, sun-drenched banks, tiny waterfalls, volcanic grottoes, etc., and studded with several hundred pieces of ferns, etc., which are displayed in delightful naturalness and harmony. The whole design has been so well carried out in its execution and other details that it appears as if these fantastical rock masses had been directly produced at the place by the hand of nature, where the equally natural fern thicket, the careful arrangement of the water, and the banking and clustering of more lively plants lend an enchantment to the scene, strongly reminding one of some passages in the "Arabian Nights." No one could leave a more congenial mark in which to converse or perfect his ideal excursions, and few persons with any soul will leave this form of rock and plants, since a retreat of an hour, without a feeling of regeneration and quiet enjoyment. And, I think, none but those few unfortunate ones will run away disappointed, for when a rock is but a large stone, and a lively plant a bunch of strange weeds,

work on several other public commissions. Grotesque rockeries on two small triangular carriage-drive islands in The Domain—credited as his constructions—are very typical of his artistic style and design. At the Melbourne Zoological Garden, in 1886-87, he erected 'a very handsome rockery and pond' and '... a platypus pool with rocks and burrows and holes for them to live in.' Another project was the 'Rockery' in the Melbourne General Cemetery in c.1889. In Malvern Gardens he crafted the 'handsome fountain and a fish pond, fashioned in artistic grotto work' in 1888. In 1892 he was at work in the Darling Gardens, Clifton Hill, creating a rockery and a series of ponds.

In about 1896 Robinette decided to shift his family to the alluvial goldfields in the Ovens Valley in north-eastern Victoria. What prompted this decision is unknown; possibly he had insufficient horticultural commissions to sustain him due to the stock market crash. He died after a short illness at his residence in Porepunkah in 1921, aged 80 years, and was buried in the Bright Cemetery. The Alpine Observer recorded him simply as 'a well-known and highly respected resident of Porepunkah.'

Advertisement Flyer,
'C. Robinette, Artistic Grotto
and Horticultural Builder,
Malvern', c.1899.
(Fleming collection)

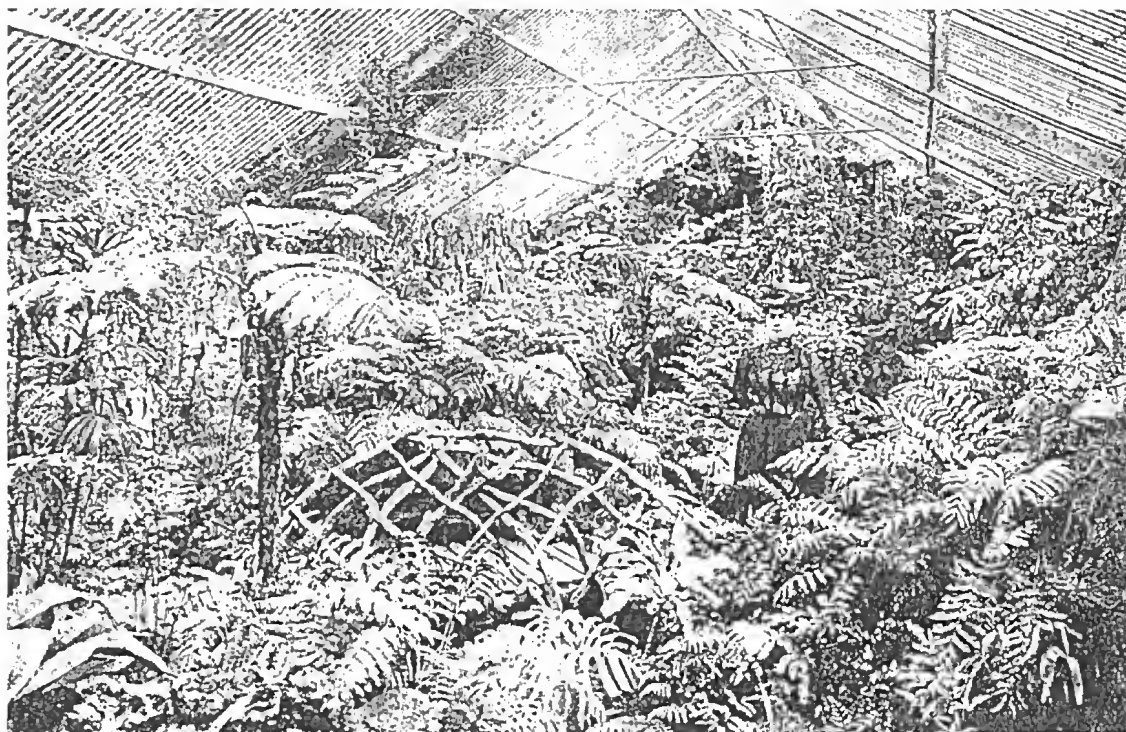
Acknowledgments

Richard Aitken who encouraged much of this research. Nina and Ray Fleming, Di Foster and the City of Stonnington Historical Collection, Catherine de Courcy, Tina Meyer, Geoff Hall, Seth Hall, David Gilbert, Maree Vickridge, the Burke Museum archive in Beechworth, Professor John Dixon Hunt, John Moreton and the Bright & District Historical Society, Isobel Paton, and Dr Pauline Payne.

Fernery and grotto at 'Montefiore', 1902. Source: *The Australian Gardener*, 1 December 1902, p. 4.

The Legacy

Charles Robinette therefore stands out as an unusual and significant landscape designer in the history of Australian horticulture and landscape design. Between 1875 and 1920 he crafted some of the most significant public and private grotto and rockery structures known in Adelaide and Melbourne. His authorship of these artistic works disappeared because of his artisan status, minimal recognition in period publications and journals, and due to the promotional activities of the public clients he worked for that often appropriated any accolades of the artistic quality of the structures and success as their own.



GLORIOUS GREECE

01 An Odyssey for the past 4 years
With Caroline Davies,
Penny Dunn and David Martin

Spring in Attica-Crete-Corfu

April 17 – May 8

Brilliant displays of wildflowers...Peak flowering of Mediterranean gardens...Ancient sites and mediaeval monasteries in dramatic situations ...Private villas in superb settings...Unique contemporary art and antique collections...Meals in traditional tavernas or private homes...Fine accommodation in 3 hotels only with fabulous views over clear-blue seas...

Autumn in Corfu-Epirus-Delphi

October 2 – 23

Autumn flora, private villas and gardens of Corfu...Ancient culture of unspoilt Epirus: mountain villages, forests, sites of antiquity and deep gorges in the outer reaches of north-west Greece...Delphi, sacred to Apollo and home of the Oracle...Walking on the slopes of Mount Marnassus...Fine accommodation in Corfu, Ioannina, Meteora and Delphi

(Acland Travel Licence No. 30016)

Details from: **Caroline Davies Garden Tours**
6 May Road, Toorak, Vic. 3142 Tel/Fax (03) 9827

JULIE KEEGAN TOURS

Established 1983

PROGRAMME FOR 2001

South of France, Italian Lakes, Tuscany

– Departs 23 April –

Julie arranges programmes for the discerning traveller all at a leisurely pace.

Enjoy private visits to houses and gardens, driving through country villages and enjoying local food and wine. First class accommodation.

Taste of Vietnam

– Mid November –

A short break with option to visit Ankor Wat, Cambodia.

BROCHURES

JULIE KEEGAN TOURS PTY LTD

7 Cove Street Watsons Bay Sydney 2030

Tel (02) 9337 1147 Fax (02) 9337 6782

Licence No: 2TA 4710

GROTTO

R I P P O N L E A

by Richard Heathcote



MOONLIGHT BOATING PARTIES at the Rippon Lea estate in Melbourne must have been exhilarating.

The large lake presented imposing vistas by day but at night, with sights and sounds augmented, it must have been very dramatic for the revellers afloat. In its heyday, during the 1890s, Sir Frederick and Lady Sargood's famous garden in Elsternwick was the scene for all kinds of social events and public functions. The Sargoods knew how to use their grounds to best advantage and *Table Talk*, Melbourne's society periodical, often described the occasions. Reports offered detailed, careful comment on which ladies were most fashionably dressed in contrast to the unrestrained hyperbole about the extensive and well kept grounds.

Frederick Sargood was a merchant baron who acquired his wealth in the Victorian goldrush years of the 1850s establishing an extensive soft goods and haberdashery business. Gardening was his hobby and great passion which he pursued vigorously. His head gardener, Adam Anderson, and his landscaper, William Sangster, were both Scotsmen and well grounded in the picturesque tradition which they had experienced during their formative years in Scotland. Anderson had worked

for the Duke of Aberdeen at Haddo and Sangster trained on the Duke of Hamilton's estate in Ayrshire.

A major element in Sangster's scheme in the early 1880s for improving Rippon Lea involved extending the lake to three times its existing size. The soil removed to achieve this was then used to create a mound with tunnels and a lookout tower situated at the top, providing panoramic views of Port Phillip Bay. This created scale adding interest to a relatively flat site and provided further landscaping opportunities.

Sangster created a number of picturesque features to exploit fully the impact of the extended lake. These included islands, bridges, waterfalls and extensive ornamental rockwork all of which survive intact today. The most delightful feature is the garden grotto situated behind the main waterfall on the north face of the mound. The grotto is approached from a path that skirts the mound winding round the south side of the lake. It is essentially a curved corridor with a barrel vaulted roof lined with volcanic rocks.

Boating parties were a regular event at Rippon Lea and moonlight boating a particularly dramatic garden occasion.

La Trobe Collection,
State Library of Victoria

The grotto entrance taken shortly after Sangster completed landscaping. Photographed by J. M. Lindt c 1885.

Courtesy of Brian Webster



The grotto at Rippon Lea does not appear to have had any decorative plasterwork or inset decoration such as the sheep's knuckle bones and sea shells of the Werribee Park grotto, also extant and in Victoria. Although not fanciful in this way, the hooks in the ceiling of the grotto cave at Rippon Lea tell us that it was lit and accessible during the moonlight boating parties held in the pleasure grounds.

The grotto's best effect is the sensation of the sublime experienced from within as the cascade from the waterfall crashes into the pool. The overwhelming noise and visual excitement is heightened inside the cave as slits in the rock work provide glimpses out to the falling water as well as shafts of light for the interior. A large opening offers a grand vista across the lake and wooden benches encourage the grotto's use as a cool resting place on hot summer days.

The plantings around the feature were informal and relatively wild revealing the large volcanic rocks which face the north elevation of the mound and lake surrounds. This picturesque feature must have held great attraction for the young Sargood children (five sons and five daughters) and their friends. A secret cave to repair to out of view from parents and servants ever watchful eye!

The grotto at Rippon Lea is currently not open to the public as some of the rockwork is unstable and in need of structural repair.

However, the mound, lookout tower and waterfalls are all accessible and reward the explorer with wonderful garden views. The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) who own and manage the gardens are planning to undertake repairs in the near future so that this secret and exotic feature can once more be experienced by visitors to the pleasure grounds. Although rowboat rides operate for visitors on summer Sunday afternoons, the Trust has yet to make arrangements for moonlight boating parties. Perhaps when the Grotto reopens this would be a suitable celebration?

Rippon Lea Estate is open to the public daily 10am to 5pm except Christmas Day & Good Friday.

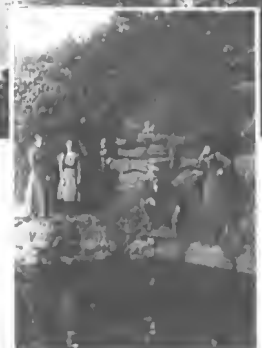
Sargood children and friends photographed at the entry to the grotto at Rippon Lea c 1888.

National Trust Collections

For nearly ten years **Richard Heathcote** has managed Rippon Lea Estate for the National Trust in Victoria. This year Como Historic House and garden was added to his portfolio providing him with even less time to tend his own modest suburban family garden but increased opportunities for studying the social use and landscape history of these William Sangster gardens.



La Trobe Collection, State Library of Victoria



W I T H

I N T H E I R

Pockets

ARCHIVES SEMINAR 2000

a review

DOLLS AND BRASSIERES STUFFED WITH SEEDS were some of the intriguing details to emerge from the Victorian Branch's Winter Seminar, 'With Seeds in Their Pockets': immigrants and their gardens in Victoria' at the State Library's new conference facility.

The purpose of the seminar was to investigate the contribution of different cultural groups to our garden heritage from 1840 to 2000 and to support the ongoing development of the Garden History Archive, recently established as part of the La Trobe Picture and Manuscripts collection.

The speakers were, Maria Tence from the Immigration Museum; Recreating a sense of home: Immigrants and gardens 1920-2000. Diane Reilly; the La Trobe Librarian, The La Trobe Collection and Governor La Trobe's Garden at Jolimont. Eddie Butler-Bowden from the Museum of Victoria; The Front Lawn: An Anglo Australian Obsession. Basil Natoli; from Community Services Victoria Community Gardens Across Victoria. Sue Ebury; Verika's Australian Garden and Suzanne Hunt; A priceless legacy: The English Garden Tradition in 19th century Victoria, both members of AGHS (Vic). The topics covered ranged from general comments about social attitudes towards gardening to the motivation for their creation. They also explored changing fashions in garden design from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries and gardening in different contexts. For instance gardens cultivated for the production of food, and the role of gardens in helping immigrants to reshape the landscape, making it less foreign and strange.

A practical example of how ideas have been introduced and adapted was demonstrated by

Sue Ebury in her discussion of Verika's Australian Garden. This case study compared the cyclical rituals surrounding the subsistence style of food crop cultivation in the harsh Dinaric region of Bosnia Herzegovina with the type of garden that Verika, a Bosnian refugee, subsequently created in the Central Highlands area of Victoria. Although Verika adjusted to a different climate and terrain it came as no surprise to learn that the production of foodstuffs was still a major consideration for her. Many of the vegetable, fruit and nut tree varieties she currently grows are ones that she was familiar with. Her Australian gardening experience did however enable her to extend this knowledge to include flowers amongst the corn, potato, herbs and tomato plants. Perhaps the most significant revelation about Verika's experience was a comment made to her by Bosnian compatriots who perceived that garden cultivation was no longer a necessity in the relatively affluent lifestyle now enjoyed in Australia. Why, they wondered, would she still continue to undertake such hard peasant work!

Basil Natoli also made the observation that familiar herbs, spices and vegetables were the first plants to be grown in community gardens he has helped to establish. Mainly worked by migrants from Asia the creation of these small plots has effectively helped to breakdown racial barriers and



Community gardens - Belgium Street, Richmond, Victoria.
Photos by Libby Brown

Ron D'Aprano in his
back garden. 1988
State Library of Victoria
Collection LRN 821371



provides a wonderful opportunity for people living in high-rise accommodation to combine a leisure activity with growing foodstuffs for the table.

How some of the most recent exotic plant material was introduced remained a vexed issue for future discussion. Trouser cuffs, gumboots and underwear were some of the likely methods of transportation hinted at. The general consensus was however, that the overwhelming desire to sustain a similar garden culture in a foreign environment will make it difficult to eradicate the practice entirely.

The socialisation of gardening through the media was the message imparted by Eddie Butler-Bowden in his amusing look at *The Front Lawn: An Anglo-Australian Obsession*. The significance of the front lawn as a symbol of power and pride in the Australian psyche was not lost on advertising agencies. The maintenance of this most sacred of spaces became the province of the male member of the household who were advised to clip and mow their lawn in the pursuit of perfection. Lawned areas in contemporary vernacular also afforded sleek green areas around minimalist architectural sites and cool refreshing places on which to rest from the frantic pace of modern living. The utilisation of the front garden space for growing food crops by European immigrants provided an interesting comparison.

The contribution of migrant groups from the colonial period to the year 2000 has been immense. Primarily, the story of our garden culture has been the successful naturalisation of introduced plant

material. It is a rich and diverse heritage that reflects the character and patterns of British, European, and mostly Asian migration. This seminar was an attempt to focus upon the contribution of some of these cultural groups, who having chosen to settle in Victoria, brought with them ideas, skills and preferences for plants and garden styles that they adapted into their new way of life. The sociology of gardens is perpetually changing. Garden history does not belong exclusively to the nineteenth or twentieth century - it is happening in Melbourne right this minute and it is important to try to document and understand how our most recent arrivals create their own 'sense of place'.

The development of the Garden History Archive at the State Library is an ongoing project for the Victorian Branch. This year we produced a beautiful coloured brochure, called "*Garden History in Every Backyard*" that highlights the work of the library and our Society. A photographic record of the garden at 'Claremont' in Geelong was funded by the library, and will form part of the archive and there have been some significant donations including the journals of a well known Melbourne landscaper, garden photographs by Libby Brown and a century of records from the Rose Society of Victoria. The State Library has already placed our brochure on their web site and is keen to work with us to contact groups and individuals who may have material that they would like to donate.

We are thrilled with the success that has so far been achieved and encourage other State Branches to consider undertaking their own archives project. The benefits include raising the public profile of the society by working with an established institution, creating a body of material that can be used for future research and publication and, importantly, ensuring that our garden history is preserved for future generations.

For further information contact Suzanne Hunt - Archives Co Ordinator (03) 9827 8073.

Suzanne Hunt is a social historian and former Museum Curator. Currently writing and undertaking research on the sociology of gardening in Victoria, Suzanne is the Archives Co-ordinator for the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society.

Venka and her husband in the garden.
Photograph by Sue Ebury



CHARLTON



Circa 1880s

The subject of Sydney Long's 'River House' painting, a National Trust listed garden with renovations to house by Professor Leslie Wilkinson. Two acres of romantic rambling gardens created by Sheila Hoskins on the banks of the Mulwaree River on the outskirts of Goulburn.

Five bedroom house, drawing room overlooking the garden and river, formal dining room and large family room with tennis court and a number of charming garden buildings, including turn of the century brick stables.

Enquiries

Elders Real Estate Goulburn
Dick Greenlees

email gbnbch@goulburn.net.au mobile 0412 770482 office 4821 9222

'I KNOW ONE DAY MY OLD PEARS WILL DIE', says Barbara Jennings, one of the many contributors to this alluring book.

'I hope I die first - it would break my heart. But you have to accept that that's nature, and you move on and redesign the area'. The blend of passion and acquiescence here is immensely appealing; the cheerful acknowledgement that however tenaciously you struggle to realise your personal ambitions you will always be brought up short by forces beyond your control. This is what makes gardeners such interesting people: they are creative, nurturing, sensual and fervent, yet with egos kept neatly trimmed by circumstance.

It was such a simple idea to let gardeners speak directly about their own properties and their own experiences. The result is a garden book that reads like a stimulating conversation with interesting people rather than a lecture by experts. These people are experts, of course, but they have gained their expertise through years of practical experience, learning by their mistakes, and what strikes one most is their modesty, as well as their frankness.

They live all over Australia, from the dry centre to the tropics; on stately country properties and on quarter-acre suburban blocks. All are members of Australia's Open Garden Scheme, for which this book is a fine advertisement.

And they present us with a vast range of views and opinions. If you got them all together, you'd generate some memorable arguments about what plants

belong where, what weather patterns are most suitable ('I have no desire for a tropical garden', says one, while another couldn't garden in a cold climate) and what might constitute an Australian style.

The colour photographs are luscious and beautifully printed. My only complaint is that they tend to concentrate on details, so we don't often get a good sense of what the overall effect is, or of how the garden relates to its environment. When one gardener, for example, describes the transformation she wrought by removing a drive that 'cut right across the vista down the garden', you long to see what she's talking about. Sketch plans would certainly have helped in this regard.

Still, the book is certainly seductive and that, I suppose, is the point. It makes you want to get out there to see these gardens for yourself and to meet the people who created them and care for them. One, Dennis Hundscheidt, says 'I would like to be known as a good gardener. I would like people to say, oh yes, I remember him, he was a good gardener'. A noble enough ambition, I reckon.



The Open Garden: Australian Gardens and their gardeners
by Louise Earwaker and
Neil Robertson
Sydney, 2000, Allen and Unwin
RRP \$65.00 (inc. GST)

Review by Peter Timms

NOTED BOTANICAL HISTORIAN, Dr Lionel Gilbert, has documented the fascinating history of the creation of Elizabeth Bay garden by Alexander McLeay.



The book, to be launched this month, is particularly relevant to this issue as it includes details and two photographs of the grotto, which has in part survived the development of housing and subdivision that has all but obliterated any traces of McLeay's grand creation.

The grotto, although derelict, has enormous historical significance. Elizabeth Bay House was designed by colonial architect, John Verge and the remaining neo-classical scroll work still to be seen in the grotto, could perhaps be the work of Verge too. The magnificent carving which is the focal point of the grotto, bears the date 1835, which must surely make it Australia's earliest grotto. Based on a natural rock shelter and reinforced with sandstone blocks, it remains virtually intact, although overgrown with moss and having suffered being used as a place for burning garden refuse in recent years.

The grotto is to be found in the Arthur McElhone Reserve, a small carefully designed and well maintained park in front of Elizabeth Bay House along with 'some intriguing, if forlorn, fragments of such

romantic features as a winding watercourse, circuitous pathways, massive retaining walls, balustrades and stairways, pools, fountains ... interspersed with patches of exotic leafy growth' Dr Lionel Gilbert writes that these remain as poignant relics of one of the most significant centres of horticultural influence in 19th century New South Wales.

The gardens, started in 1828, long before Elizabeth Bay House was built, overlook Sydney Harbour. Alexander McLeay, Colonial Secretary, had the foresight to retain the indigenous trees and shrubs as well as sourcing exotics from throughout the world. The book is a fascinating account of the creation of the garden and contains not only lists of plants, but where they came from and who sent them to McLeay. More than a book about plants, it is a tribute to the McLeay family, who made an enormous contribution to early scientific investigation in the founding colony of New South Wales.

It may also hopefully spark an interest in preserving the grotto - such an integral component of our Australian garden history.

Mr McLeay's Elizabeth Bay Garden
by Dr Lionel Gilbert
Mulini Press
PO Box 82, Jamison Centre,
Canberra, ACT 2614
\$10.00 post free

Review by Trisha Dixon



index

Kirstie McRobert has once again undertaken the meticulous task of indexing *Australian Garden History*. Kirstie has indexed the entire Volumes 1 - 10 which have been published in one volume. This has been an exacting and labour intensive task and the Society would like to acknowledge and thank Kirstie for her enormous contribution.

Copies of the Index will be available at the Conference and through the AGHS Office.

AMAZING NEWS

Secretary and Treasurer of the South Australian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society, Miriam Hansman recently attended a workshop on the Belair National Park organised by Hassell Ltd. Discussions with the local National Parks & Wildlife Service indicate they now realize the historical importance of the maze and are taking an interest in managing the maze. The Committee is now working on some improvements to the Maze to prepare it for a possible handover.

FRONT COVER



image

The *Corymbia ficifolia* featured on the front cover is included in the newly released *Jenny Phillips' Australian Botanical Artists National Trust Desk Diary 2001*.

Jenny is Director of the Botanical Art School of Melbourne in Punt Road, South Yarra where she transforms often complete beginners into skilled botanic artists – the most exacting of art forms. Her generosity of spirit, her passion for her art, her consummate skill and unwavering belief in

her student's ability to succeed have earned her hundreds of devotees throughout the world. Jenny has been teaching artists and enthusiasts for the past nine years and the diary not only features her own work, but the art of many of her students.

The front cover image is also available as a signed and numbered limited edition and is available from Botanicart (03) 9820 3331



SUBSCRIPTIONS

I/we wish to become a member of the Australian Garden History Society and enclose my/our subscription.

Name(s)
 Address State Postcode
 Telephone: Home () Business ()
 Email Address

Subscription Rates Please tick (GST inclusive)

- Individual Member \$47
- Household Membership (2 adults and children) \$61
- Company/Institution/Library \$73
- Youth Rate (25 years and under) \$20
- 3 year Individual Member \$132
- 3 year Household Membership \$165
- 3 year Company/Institution/Library \$198
- Donation * \$

Cheque/Money order enclosed: Please make cheques out to the *Australian Garden History Society*

Please debit my credit card: VISA MASTERCARD BANKCARD

Card No. Expiry date

Cardholder's signature

The Society is affiliated with the Australian Council of National Trusts and is thereby able to benefit from the Trusts' tax deductible status.

*Donations are welcome and should be payable to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and forwarded to the AGHS.

Membership benefits: subscription to the Society's official journal, *Australian Garden History*, six times a year; garden related seminars, lectures, garden visits and specialist tours; opportunity to attend annual conference and conference tour; contributing to the preservation of historic gardens for posterity.

AGHS Office, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Vic. 3141

Phone (03) 9650 5043 Toll Free 1800 678 446 Fax (03) 9650 8470

THIS FORM CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED SO THAT THE JOURNAL CAN BE RETAINED INTACT

CALENDAR of EVENTS

NOVEMBER

SATURDAY 25

Vic Birregurra - Working Bee at Mooleric *Enquiries* (03) 9397 2260.

SUNDAY 26

Tas Freshwater Point Christmas Picnic Luncheon in a beautiful waterfront garden, created in 1824 *Bookings and enquiries* Deirdre Pearson 03 6225 3084

DECEMBER

MONDAY 4

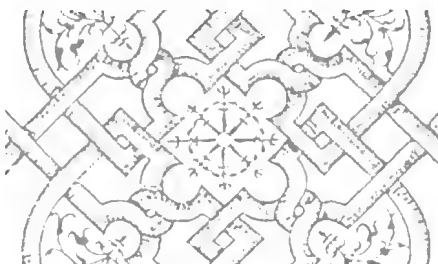
Vic Melbourne Christmas function - Footscray Park *Enquiries* 03 9397 2260

FRIDAY 15

SA Adelaide - Christmas function *Venue* Quixley home, 3 Britton Avenue, Tranmere *Time* 6 - 8pm *Cost* \$10 (non-members \$12)

SATURDAY 16

ACT Symonston Christmas party at Mugga Mugga - explore the cottage and see the restoration of Lizzie Curley's 'cottage garden' (c. 1915) *Time* 4 - 6pm *Cost* Members \$8.00 (non-members \$10) *Directions* Entrance to Mugga Mugga is opposite the Therapeutic Goods Laboratories in Narrabundah Lane, Symonston *RSVP* to AGHS, Box 1630, Canberra, ACT 2601 by Monday December 11.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor

This very beautiful Victorian garden urn is situated in pride of place in our Warrnambool Botanic Gardens. The Friends are trying to identify it and better yet, find out where it came from. It is believed that the urn was placed in the Gardens at the turn of the century. One of the Friends thinks that being so Italian in style, it could possibly be a Brancusi.

In an endeavour to find out more information I am writing to you to ask if any of your members might have any ideas on its origins.

We are currently searching through old Council minutes but there seem to be no papers nor correspondence on the urn. Actually there was a fire some years ago and many valuable papers were lost at that time.

Yours sincerely

Marigold Curtis

Friends of the Warrnambool Botanic Gardens Inc. Committee Member

PO Box 1190

Warrnambool 3280

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY

EDITORSHIP

OF JOURNAL

Nina Crone from Victoria has been appointed as the new Editor of *Australian Garden History* and will take up the three year appointment for the first issue in 2001. Nina has been an active member of the Australian Garden History Society participating in conferences, tours and working bees and was Secretary of the Victorian Branch for two years.

Former Principal of Melbourne Girls Grammar School and Producer/Director Radio and Television Programmes for the ABC, Nina has also lectured in garden history to Landscape Design students and in January was awarded an OAM for services to education.

Nina is well known to Victorians as a garden columnist for *The Age* writing under the name Alison Dalrymple. She had also been a regular contributor to the Journal and assisted with proof reading. Nina holds a B. Ed, Dip. Ed. and a B.A. in History and French from the University of Melbourne and a Diplôme sur les Institutions Internationales from the University of Geneva.

The Chairman of the Society, Peter Watts, said he was delighted with the appointment and said the National Management Committee looked forward to working with Nina. He paid tribute to Trisha Dixon who has edited the journal for the past 6 years and extended a very warm thank you to her on behalf of all members.

The Lady in Blue

by Trisha Dixon



"Bobundara" An Early Australian Homestead by Percy F. S. Spence from *Australia* Painted by Percy F.S. Spence Described by Frank Fox

The house façade looked the same – the steps, even the pink oxalis – how intriguing to see a painting of our home and garden in an unknown book. Flipping through the book there were more paintings of tall gaitered men in the Bobundara office, of men on horseback and ploughing teams on the Lucerne flats, a horse-drawn sulky at the front gate and many more.

We had recently moved to our property Bobundara, and here was a feast of beautiful watercolours by an early Australian artist that we (and the previous owners) had no idea existed. The book, simply titled *Australia* was a modern second edition, so imagine our delight in finding an original leatherbound copy, published in London in 1910. The paintings were by Percy Frederick Seaton Spence (1868 – 1933), a prolific and talented artist who moved to London in 1895 (his portrait of R.L. Stevenson is in the National Portrait Gallery in London).

The identity of the lady in blue has become as much of a mystery as the location of the painting of our home and garden. Much of the fun of living in an historic garden is the research to try and unravel the development through the years. Old photographs together with oral and written history help piece together a compelling but far too inconclusive picture. To find such a wealth of art work was pure delight – but where to find the identity of people portrayed and perhaps view the originals?

Art historian, Mary Eagle, who recently contributed to the *Journal* (Back page article Vol 12 No 1), provided key research clue tools. 'Assess the costumes of the people in the paintings,' she urged. The dress of 'the lady in blue' along with the riding attire of the men in the other paintings of Bobundara were placed as most definitely 'Edwardian' (1901-1910) which put aside our assumption of the 'lady in blue' as Mrs Wilbraham Edwards (Ida Emiline Ryrie who died in 1896 after the birth of their son).

Photographs of the Edwards showed the same aquiline features as depicted in the paintings. Also, we had been told the next owners (the 'dashing' Cambridge-educated Sellar brothers) had no women visitors. And yet, during their ownership, an elegant

woman 'appeared' in a painting of Bobundara. One of many letters received provides a clue: *'they lived it up and had Governors and ADCs to stay and the odd aristocrat from England, that sort of thing...Mr Douglas was a Shakespearean scholar, Mr Walter a pianist who played six hours a day for their own enjoyment. The homestead was a large comfortable home, well run with a very beautiful garden running down to the creek...the vegetables were all grown at the back of the homestead and poultry and turkeys across the creek. One day when the brothers and Uncle were in Cooma one of the servants found the key to the cupboard where the alcohol was kept and all got dead drunk. The gardener who had been burning some leaves lit the fire and it got away, a neighbour coming home saw the fire and stopped it before it got to the house, but the lovely garden was destroyed. When the brothers returned they were so angry that they sent them back to Japan, got some local people in and went to Manly to live.'*

'Check your local newspaper for visiting dignitaries for the periods Spence was back in Australia' Mary suggested. And what a plethora of names there were with nearby Dalgety a promising site for the proposed Capital. The only females however were Lady Chelmsford and Governor Rawson's daughter – who both visited twice.

'Ascertain the time of year from what is in flower' - the pink oxalis which forms a stunning border in the painting (and is flowering profusely at the time of writing) along with the Red Flanders Poppies indicate spring and there – on October 22, 1908, is the second visit by Miss Rawson – a long shot, but perhaps the enigmatic 'lady in blue'?

Not a maze in the true sense of the word, but just as a maze is intended to confuse, frustrate, disorient and challenge with its baffling complexity, there are parallels in my search. Optimistic that in relinquishing editorship, there will be time to research the labyrinth of information and solve the mystery, I would be grateful for any clues! As a finale, warm thanks for the support of so many people over the years, the contributions to the *Journal* and all the wonderful letters.